THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

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ALL THAT JAZZ

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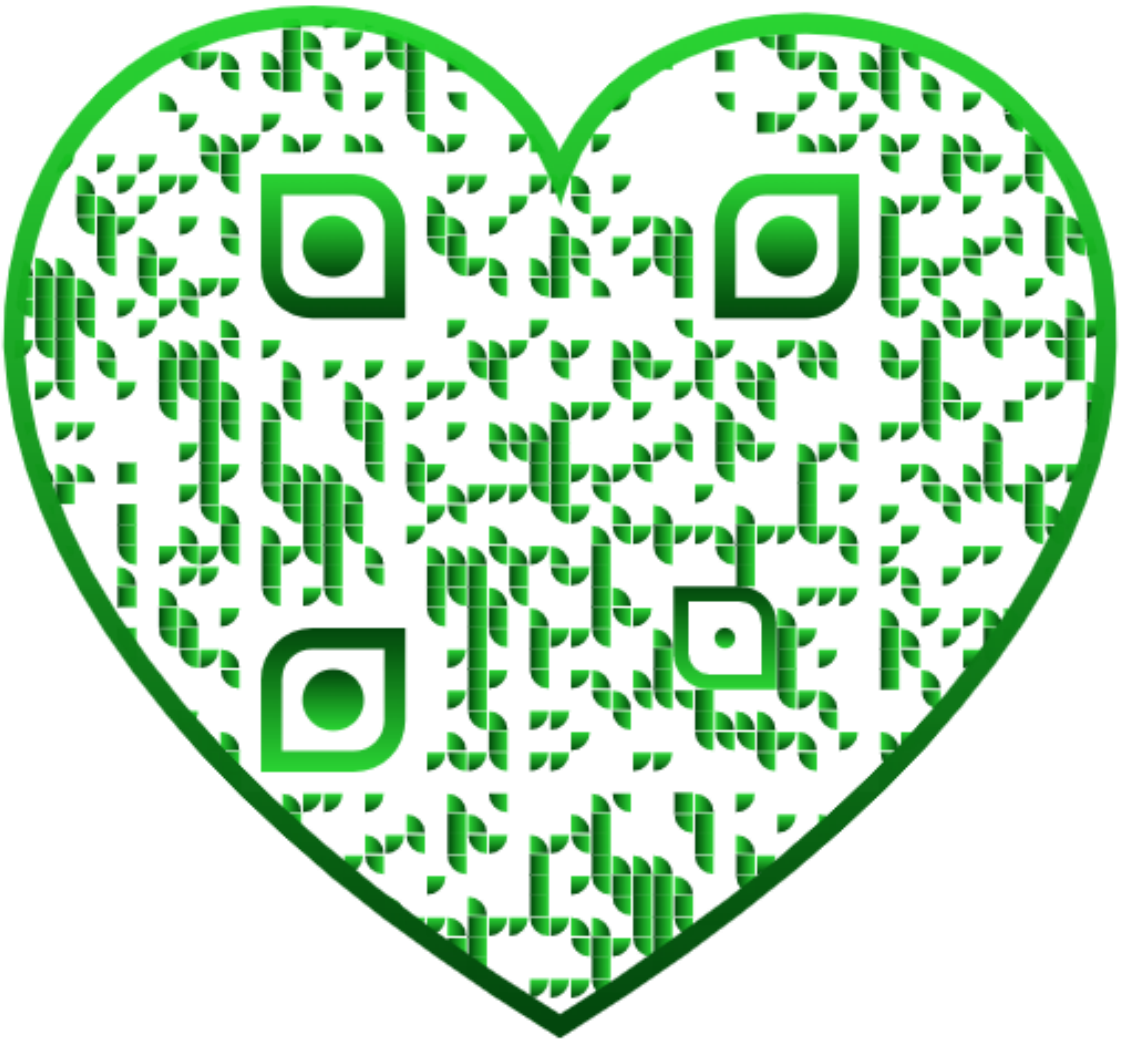

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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The late Sixties saw the first recordings of a select group of US musicians: in Los Angeles Gram Parsons passed through the ranks of the Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers, while Ry Cooder emerged from session work. On the East Coast, meanwhile, the Band were emerging from Dylan's shadow to prove a potent musical force in their own right, while Van Morrison left R&B roots behind in his native Ireland to produce a psychedelic masterpiece in 1968's *Astral Weeks*.

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All That Jazz

Rock energy and jazz sophistication made for a brief, exciting union

WHATEVER JAZZ-ROCK IS, it is not just jazz musicians playing solos over rock rhythms. It is a specific style that grew up over a number of years from a number of sources, and that had sufficient musical unity both to be recognised as a style in its own right and eventually to choose its own musical direction. The problem is that it is essentially a fusion of two musics whose basic aim is usually totally different. Jazz and rock have contrasting ideologies, although the musical building blocks they use may be very similar, or in many cases identical. Jazz is very much a music of personal expression, in which the individual pushes himself to ever more intense degrees of communication, often measuring himself against the technical problems of his instrument or the difficulties of the musical form he has chosen. Rock, on the other hand, is about the promulgation of a more general – more social – expression in which the subtleties or introspection of jazz may be completely out of place.

In spite of these aesthetic differences, there are factors that inevitably draw rock and jazz together. The first, and most important, is that both are part of the American popular music tradition. A 12-bar blues in B flat uses the same basic chords whether played in the style of blues singer Robert Johnson, the Glenn Miller Orchestra, John Coltrane or the New York Dolls. These different ways of playing interrelate at many levels; a certain basic facility enables a musician to join different types of groups and to play in any number of different styles before he becomes established in any one of them.

Another major similarity between American jazz and rock, apart from the common elements in their musical tradition, is that both operate under certain important commercial restraints – basically, the need to appeal to a paying audience, whether of record buyers or club and concert-goers.

Between 1965 and 1975 a variety of these common factors drew jazz and rock together. While some critics might argue that the results of this fusion were disappointing, certain musicians managed to amalgamate jazz techniques with the power and general appeal of rock, creating work of lasting worth.

Through the sound barrier

Jazz, of course, was one of the traditions from which rock'n'roll and rockabilly had emerged in the mid Fifties. During the early years of rock, however, the two musics had little time for each other. Jazz musicians despised rock as simple, vulgar, containing no opportunities for personal expression and designed solely to extract the maximum amount of money from the pockets of gullible young people. Rock musicians, meanwhile, found jazz arid, wrapped up in dry technicalities and saying little they could relate to.

During the early to mid Sixties, a new generation of jazz musicians began to come of age. These were people to whom rock was not some alien monster that had suddenly arisen; rather, it was part of their musical heritage, a sound that, like the blues or R&B, had been a part of the musical wallpaper as they were growing up. Unlike their Fifties predecessors, these younger musicians were not worried by the harmonic simplicity of rock; the avant-garde jazz of the early Sixties represented by Ornette Coleman or John Coltrane was turning its back on the harmonic complexities of previous jazz. At the same time, rock had developed a sufficiently large body of tunes for jazzmen to utilise them – rather as they had mined the rich musical vein of popular stage and film musicals in the Thirties and Forties.

Early attempts at a fusion of jazz and rock elements were hardly convincing, however. When jazzmen tried to investigate the country tradition, as in Jimmy Giuffre's *The Train And The River* (1958), Bob Brookemeyer's tune 'Jive-Hoot' or Gary Burton's *Country Roads And Other Places* (1968), the results were sometimes charming, but hardly powerful; and when black pop was investigated, as in pianist Ramsey Lewis' versions of Stevie Wonder's 'Uptight (Everything's Alright)' and Dobie Gray's 'The "In" Crowd', the records could

Miles Davis blows his own trumpet. The veteran horn player's move to electric instrumentation, initially motivated by competition from the rock field, sent shock waves through the jazz establishment and almost single-handedly ushered in the jazz-rock era.

Chick Corea (above), John McLaughlin (left) and Herbie Hancock (below) were all former members of Miles Davis' band who went on to make names for themselves as jazz-rock performers. Keyboardist Corea's Return to Forever also featured virtuoso bassist Stanley Clarke (second from left).

hardly be said to have shaken the world with their intensity.

But these were merely examples of a growing trend for jazz musicians to look to rock for sources of inspiration. Musicians all over the world could see that there must be a way of combining the two styles; and tunes such as Herbie Hancock's funky (in the early Sixties meaning of the word) 'Watermelon Man' were more successful examples of stylistic fusion. In the UK, too, artists such as Brian Auger and Graham Bond were working towards combining the two; while in the US, groups were formed with the express intention of putting jazz into rock or vice versa. This was sometimes commercially a very happy union – as when Blood, Sweat and Tears and Chicago played rock with a horn section – but a coherent style proved hard to develop.

To the limit and beyond

What was needed was a way of playing in which personal expression could be combined with the widespread popularity of rock. The breakthrough came via the rapid developments in progressive rock from 1966 to 1970 and the experiments of Miles Davis. The jazz musicians who had been putting rock into their music in the mid Sixties had been using rock elements, but had not necessarily seen them as having any great expressive potential in themselves; then, in 1966 and 1967, Jimi Hendrix and Cream showed that rock had the potential within itself to be as intense as any other style. Hendrix in particular extended the possibilities of his instrument as much as any jazzman had done in the past.

The sudden expansion of progressive rock had a particularly important influence on the leading jazz trumpeter Miles Davis. Although the motivations of this complex, prickly personality are hard to fathom, there seems little doubt that falling record sales in the mid Sixties contributed to his desire to investigate the electric instruments that his more commercially successful rock rivals were using. Members of his late Sixties groups such as sax-player Wayne Shorter, pianists Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea and drummer Tony Williams (who in 1969 formed a real 'fusion' group, Lifetime, using Jack Bruce of Cream on bass, organist Larry Young and guitarist John McLaughlin) were also very interested in new possibilities.

Miles' early experiments (the 1968 LP *Filles De Kilimanjaro*, for example) were not very exciting – especially in comparison with the greatness of his previous work. But in 1969 he released *In A Silent Way*, a record that in its magical, relaxed mood showed precisely how jazz could meet rock. The following year came *Bitches Brew*, the title of which mirrored the swirl of elements in the music. Miles had shown how it could be done – and, while he continued in similar vein (albeit meeting with diminishing critical acclaim) until late in the Seventies when ill-health forced him into temporary retirement, other musicians took what he had done and used it as the basis for their own work. Donald Byrd, former hard-bop trumpeter, developed a simpler, more overtly funky style that brought him great financial success on the West Coast in the early Seventies; the Jazz Crusaders, who had played Sixties-style funk, dropped the word 'jazz' from their name, and began playing and composing in a laid-back, sophisticated style, thereby achieving massive popularity.

The boiling point

Perhaps the most important of the groups formed in the early Seventies was, however, the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Under John McLaughlin's inspired leadership, this group put together *The Inner Mounting Flame* in 1971. With its sudden time changes, its breath-taking guitar solos and the precise but powerful drumming of Billy Cobham, this LP marked one of the creative high-points of jazz-rock.

The pianists who had played on Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way* all went on to form outstandingly successful groups. Chick Corea's Return to Forever, for some time featuring the great bass-player Stanley Clarke, tended towards the Latin side of jazz-rock. Joe Zawinul formed Weather Report with Wayne Shorter and although the group had problems finding the ideal rhythm section, it remained consistently popular; in addition Herbie Hancock also found fame and fortune with a solo career, including a Seventies funk remake of 'Watermelon Man'.

The Inner Mounting Flame had proved to be the peak of jazz-rock, however. The jazz-rock groups enjoyed – and many have maintained – great popularity, but some time in the mid Seventies their ability to add anything creative to rock seemed to die. Groups like those of trumpet and flugelhorn player Chuck Mangione and sax player Grover Washington Jr continued to produce records that sold millions, while great jazz musicians who cared to turn their hand to playing music with a funky beat – trumpeter Freddie Hubbard for example – found the royalties flowing in. But something was missing.

Jazz-rock had gained a certain vitality from its connection with rock, but it gradually became the sound of filler music on TV shows, or in advertisements where a certain hip but not too young image was required. Jazz-rock built up its own establishment, its own set of musicians who tended to play in each other's bands and who considered themselves jazz musicians. These people saw themselves using rock styles merely as an aid to mass communication or mass money-making, depending upon which way you looked at it. In 1978, John McLaughlin, who had moved in new directions since 1975, was scathing about the path the music he had done so much to mould was taking: 'How do I feel about jazz-rock? Boring! It bores me to tears; it just doesn't go anywhere.'

By the early Eighties, jazz-rock was no longer part of rock; the nearest it got was in its close links with the technically expert but emotionally dead hand of disco-funk, or when its musicians were used as session men (Steve Gadd's excellent drumming on Paul Simon's '50 Ways To Leave Your Lover' for example). By then it was hard to believe how, in the early Seventies, the great combination of tastes and attitudes had put *Bitches Brew* on record shelves along with, say, *Led Zeppelin II*, Joni Mitchell's *Clouds* and Frank Zappa's *Hot Rats*. While rock changes with each generation, however, jazz musicians just seem to get older playing the same kind of music. ASHLEY BROWN

SOUNDS ORCHESTRAL

East met West in the music of John McLaughlin

'MAHAVISHNU' was the name given to John McLaughlin by his guru, Sri Chinmoy, during that period in the Seventies when McLaughlin was a disciple of Chinmoy's philosophy/religion. It is hardly surprising, then, that the mention of the Mahavishnu Orchestra will always evoke first the image of its guitarist-leader, clothed in white, wearing a benign smile but totally committed to and in charge of the music going on around him. Most of the composer credits on the Mahavishnu albums give just one name – his. Interviews in the music papers in the Seventies were invariably with him, although one of the other members of the band would occasionally be asked in awed tones what it was like working with John McLaughlin. When any news or details of the Orchestra's current philosophy was to be sought, every journalist immediately went to the fountainhead.

This is not to suggest, however, that McLaughlin deliberately surrounded himself with docile, subservient musicians who were only there to play his music, or that he chose sidemen who could only reach a mediocre level of playing and would never compete for the limelight. On the contrary, he has always played with the best in terms of technique, enthusiasm and imagination. If McLaughlin is the man most associated with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, it is because he was its instigator, he was always obviously in charge, and he never ran out of ideas or energy; when the time came to make a change he was not afraid to start again with a completely new line-up.

McLaughlin was born on 4 January 1942 in Yorkshire, England. He started playing guitar in his teens and first gained prominence with British R&B bands such as the Graham Bond Organisation and Brian Auger and the Trinity. His solo album *Extrapolation* (1969) marked his crossover into jazz. He soon became a member of Lifetime and also featured on Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way* (1969) and *Bitches Brew* (1970). By the end of that year, McLaughlin had achieved almost legendary status; the time was clearly ripe for him to form his own group. He began the process after recording *My Goal's Beyond* (1971).

Flaming fusion

The first incarnation of the Orchestra comprised Jan Hammer (born 17 April 1948) on keyboards, Jerry Goodman on violin, Billy Cobham (born 16 May 1944) on drums and Rick Laird on bass. With the possible exception of Laird, they were all players of proven ability from diverse backgrounds, capable of tackling any style of music around (and some that had hitherto not existed) at any tempo this side of the speed of light. Goodman and Cobham had first played with McLaughlin on *My Goal's Beyond*.

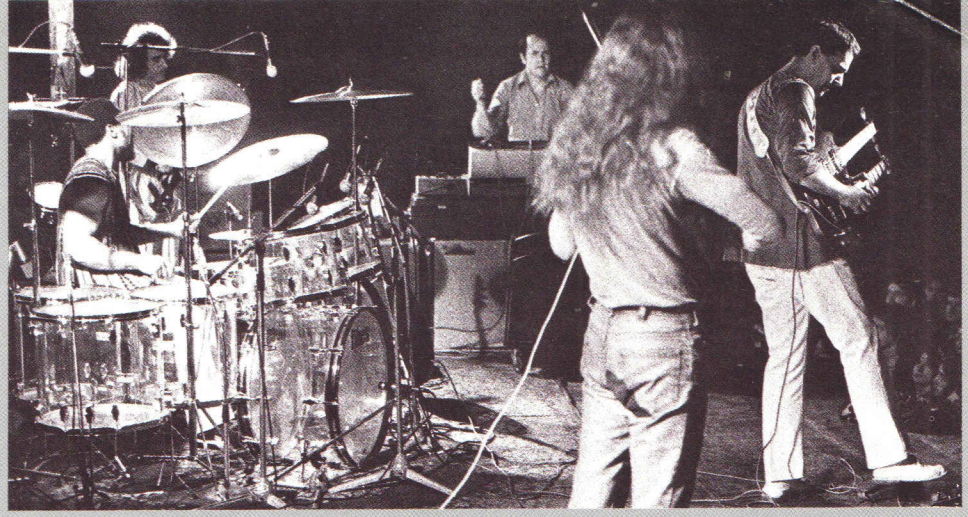
The Inner Mounting Flame was recorded in the summer of 1971 and gave notice that McLaughlin was not content merely to consolidate the pollwinner's status he had reached as a result of records with Miles Davis and other major jazz/fusion musicians. Here was a sound that was electric and yet not banal rock, music that was subtle and intelligent without being sterile or elitist.

The inevitable round of gigs followed – clubs, then large theatres and festivals as the band's reputation deservedly grew. The music developed with all the live playing until, when the album *Birds Of Fire*

appeared in 1973, the Mahavishnu trademarks of adrenalin-fuelled intensity and impossible tempos mastered without apparent effort were legendary. This album and *Between Nothingness And Eternity*, the album recorded live in New York's Central Park in August of the same year, probably give the best picture of the first Mahavishnu Orchestra at the height of its power – sounding as if the highly orchestrated sections were being played for the first time and improvising with verve and fire, as the studio album's title suggested.

From the very first phased gong smashes leading into similarly treated arpeggios on guitar and keyboards, *Birds Of Fire* evoked an atmosphere, a feeling that a journey was being embarked upon. The guitar and violin sang a wailing theme over the driving rhythm section, the various parts coming together in a complex meter that galloped away, whipped on by Cobham's knife-edge cymbals. Many musicians are snobbish about speeding up, but the title track of *Birds Of Fire* was allowed to leap ahead rather than being held back to a strict machine-like tempo.

For all McLaughlin's famed guitar-technique, he confined his own solos to terse, concise statements, never apparently trying to amaze the listener or his fellow musicians with chorus after chorus of pyrotechnics but spurting out short phrases and bending a few vital notes before taking up the theme again. On the track 'One Word', the guitar, violin and synthesiser almost held a conversation, swapping comments and suggestions while the bass and drums kept a steady back beat. It demonstrated what excellent musicians Hammer and Goodman were in their own right, as well as how equal in importance all the members were, Laird's bass providing a steady foundation beneath the others.



Left: McLaughlin the mystic is captured in typical pose. Above right: The first incarnation of the Orchestra, with drummer Billy Cobham and keyboardist Jan Hammer. Below: A later line-up.

East meets West

After three years McLaughlin felt the need for a change. Michael Walden replaced Cobham, bringing a different, supple percussion feeling, ex-Motown sessioneer Ralphe Armstrong took over the bass and Gayle Moran played keyboards. Various others played from time to time around this nucleus, including violinist Jean-Luc Ponty, who had been with Frank Zappa after leaving his native France. The album most representative of the second half of the Orchestra's life was 1974's epic *Apocalypse*, produced by George Martin, which featured tight group playing surrounded by string-orchestra sections scored by Mike Gibbs.

Then, following McLaughlin's break with his guru, the Mahavishnu Orchestra was allowed to die a natural death, having fulfilled its purpose of expressing McLaughlin's musical philosophy in the early and mid Seventies. What followed was the much more intimate Shakti, a band of Indian musicians, acoustic and almost totally Oriental in concept, while the subsequent One Truth Band lay somewhere between East and West. After the demise of that band, McLaughlin returned to his pre-Mahavishnu state, appearing with other superstars of jazz/fusion and issuing occasional (mostly acoustic) solo albums under his own name.

HUGH HOPPER

John McLaughlin and the Mahavishnu Orchestra Recommended Listening

Birds Of Fire (CBS 65321) (Includes: Miles Beyond, Celestial Terrestrial Commuters, Hope, One Word, Sanctuary); *Inner Mounting Flame* (CBS 64717) (Includes: A Lotus On Irish Streams, Vital Transformation, The Dance Of Maya, Awakening).

Chicago

Platinum sounds from an unfashionable supergroup

CHICAGO ARE one of the enigmas of rock. A large part of the rock audience has no time for them; critics have been vitriolic about them from the outset. The group maintained broadly the same line-up and remained a self-sufficient unit. Rarely was the assistance of other artists sought and rarely did its members undertake outside assignments. Chicago didn't impinge on the rest of the rock world, and the group remained unaffected by outside developments. They charted their own introspective course – and in doing so sold millions of albums.

The group was formed in Chicago in 1967. There were seven original members: Robert Lamm (keyboards and lead vocals); Pete Cetera (bass and vocals); Terry Kath

(lead guitar and vocals); James Pankow (trombone); Lee Loughnane (trumpet); Walter Parazaider (woodwind) and Dan Seraphine (drums). Pankow, Seraphine, Parazaider and Loughnane all received formal training in music at Chicago's De Paul University. Around the mid Sixties they formed the Big Thing (a name inspired by the city's Mafia connections), together with Lamm, who met the others on the local club circuit. Cetera joined them in 1966, and Kath the following year, just after they had dropped their name at the suggestion of James William Guercio, also a former De Paul student, who was to become their mentor.

Under their new name of Chicago Transit Authority they played seedy bars and small clubs throughout the Midwest, but with little success. Guercio, however, had established his own reputation on the West Coast with his production of Blood, Sweat and Tears; he invited Chicago Transit Authority to join him out there, where he thought they might fare better.

Guercio found them dates at prestigious venues like the Whiskey-A-Go-Go on Sunset Strip. He also persuaded CBS to sign the group, in spite of the company's reservations that the band sounded too similar to Blood, Sweat and Tears. He also conceived one of rock's most successful marketing campaigns. The group's debut album *Chicago Transit Authority* (1968) was a double, and retailed very cheaply in the record shops.

Their sound was calculated to arouse interest. Blood, Sweat and Tears had proved there was a market for jazz-rock. Chicago Transit Authority, however, were based more firmly in rock; despite their jazz leanings, they had a white soul sound, with a four-piece rhythm section and a brass trio.

Chanting for change

At the time, audiences were searching for something of more cultural weight, and Chicago Transit Authority fitted the bill. The music, with its jazz sequences and long solos, seemed sophisticated without ever being difficult. Lamm's lyrics, though informed by the revolutionary rhetoric of the times, were notable largely for their superficiality. However the group – or Guercio – had the striking idea of starting side four with chants recorded during the demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. This ploy cemented the group's identification with both the city and the counter-culture.

The Chicago Transit Authority duly became the first Columbia act to be accredited with a certified platinum album, even though the label boasted such names as Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel. Lamm's 'Does Anybody Really

Below: Chicago in concert – slick jazz-rock with a three-piece brass section and percussion well to the fore.

Know What Time It Is' and a splendid version of the Spencer Davis Group's 'I'm A Man' (which became a UK Top Ten single) were particularly exciting tracks.

It was in Guercio's pretentious sleevenotes for that first album that the band's name emerged: 'If you must call them something, speak of the city where all save one were born; where all of them were schooled and bred, and where all of this incredible music went down barely noticed; call them Chicago.' Chicago it was, and that served as the title of the second album, also a double, released in 1970. This repeated the commercial success of its predecessor, and provided major hit singles in 'Make Me Smile' by Pankow, and Lamm's enduringly infectious '25 Or 6 To 4'.

The third album, *Chicago III*, moved into the US Top Ten within weeks of its release early in 1971. This was again a double. The fourth, *Live At Carnegie Hall*, broke the sequence; that was a quadruple. Nevertheless, these demands on the pockets and time of their fans proved anything but counter-productive; by the end of 1971, the group had all four releases in the US album charts.

By that time their appeal had changed completely. Under Guercio's influence, they lost their exciting blend of jazz and rock and their improvisational energy as early as the second album. Their music became increasingly smooth and mechanical, and Lamm's lyrics seemed increasingly effete. Few groups could maintain a consistently high standard at such a rate of production (the equivalent of ten albums in a little under three years), and the four-album live set was particularly weak.

Critics' choice

Nevertheless, Chicago maintained their commercial appeal despite alienating the critics. The group's work attracted increasingly hostile reviews, and by 1973 Lamm was repaying bile with bile through the leadenly obvious 'Critics' Choice' on *Chicago VI*. The band's ranks were swelled by the addition of Brazilian percussionist Laudir deOliveira in 1974 – the year that Lamm released a solo album, *Skinny Boy*. In 1976 the ballad 'If You Leave Me Now' went to Number 1 on both sides of the Atlantic, and became one of the biggest-selling singles of the year.

By now, however, the group were becoming disenchanted with Guercio, whom they considered to be over-scrupulous in his management of the group's affairs, refusing permission for them to appear in the *Sgt Pepper* movie (1978), playing 'Got To Get You Into My Life'. (Their role was eventually taken by Earth, Wind and Fire, but the film was, ironically, an unmitigated disaster.) At the end of 1977, Chicago and Guercio parted company.

Above, from left: Pete Cetera, Danny Seraphine, Robert Lamm, Lee Loughnane, Terry Kath, Walter Parazaider and James Pankow. Below: Terry Kath in action.

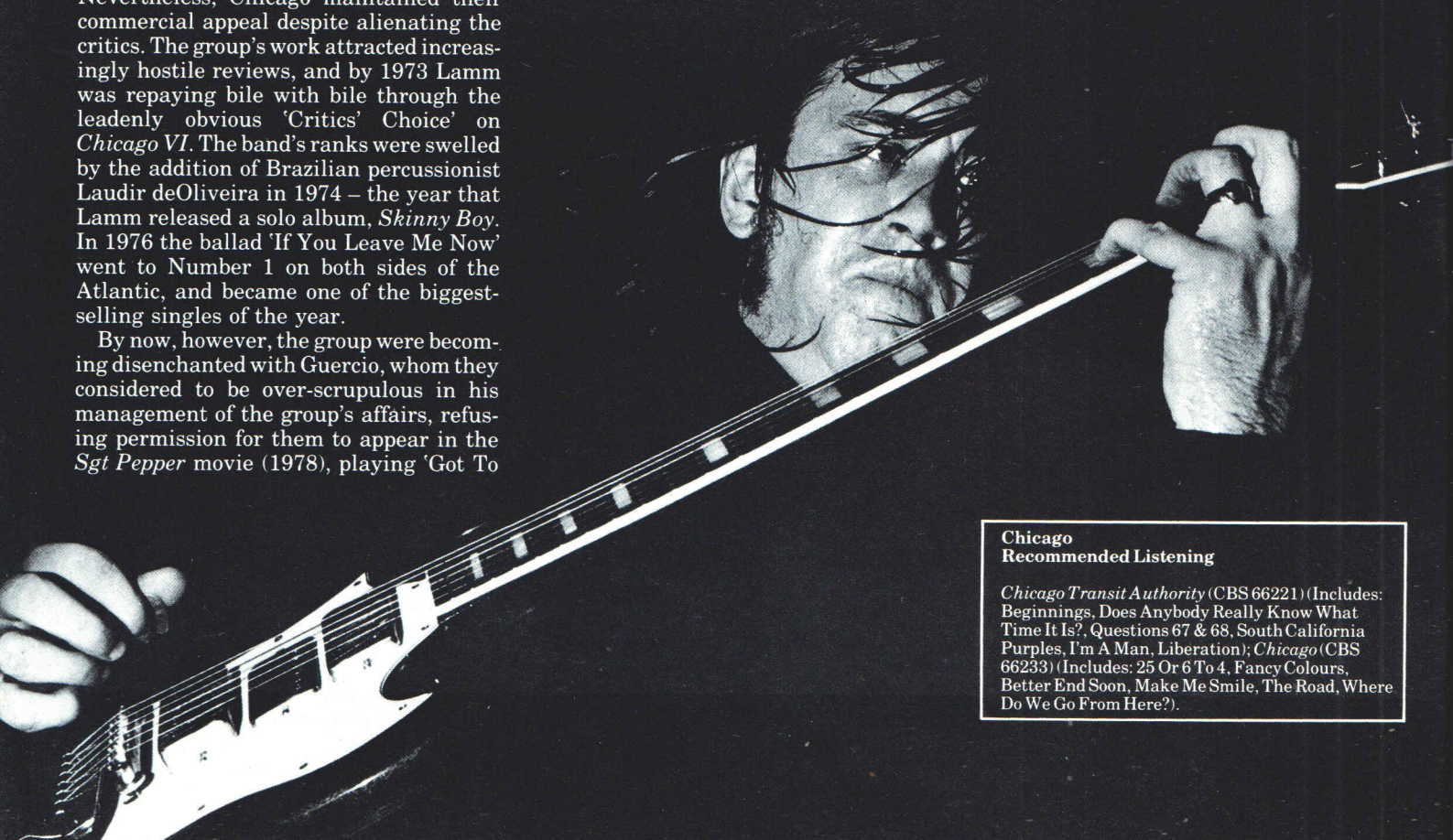
Tragic ending

On 23 January 1978 Terry Kath killed himself while playing with a pistol. For months, the future of the band was in doubt, but they appointed a new manager, Jeff Wald (Helen Reddy's husband) and resumed work. Their next album actually had a title, *Hot Streets*, and a group photograph on the cover. They replaced Kath with ex-Stephen Stills sideman Donnie Dacus, whose playing was noticeably less assertive than that of his predecessor. Ticket sales for their 1978 tour were slightly disappointing, but fans were reassured by the band's evident enthusiasm.

Co-produced by Phil Ramone, *Hot Streets* provided the band with its twelfth consecutive platinum album. Their 1979 release, *Chicago XIII*, only achieved gold status, however, and for *Chicago XIV*, the band called in veteran producer Tom Dowd. By this time, Dacus, who had never really fitted in, had been replaced by Chris Pinnick, though the absence of Kath's telling guitar contributions, which had offset the increasing blandness, was still felt.

The promotion that accompanied the band's move to Full Moon in 1982 brought them another major hit, 'Hard To Say I'm Sorry', again in the undemanding ballad style that had become Chicago's surest route to success. The paucity of the accompanying album's sales, however, suggested that the group's appeal was finally on the wane.

BOB WOFFINDEN



Chicago
Recommended Listening

Chicago Transit Authority (CBS 66221) (Includes: Beginnings, Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?, Questions 67 & 68, South California Purples, I'm A Man, Liberation); *Chicago* (CBS 66233) (Includes: 25 Or 6 To 4, Fancy Colours, Better End Soon, Make Me Smile, The Road, Where Do We Go From Here?).

MILES AHEAD

Was trumpeter Miles Davis jazz-rock's leading light?

MILES DAVIS' POSITION as a catalyst in music is unique. In the late Forties his short-lived *The Birth Of The Cool* band laid the foundations for what was to develop into the West Coast 'cool' school of jazz playing. Ten years later, he was one of the two major figures (the other being Ornette Coleman) whose experimentation led to the break-up of jazz as it was then known. From being a music where one style was prominent, it became one where many different styles of music co-existed. Within this new-found freedom Davis later initiated an approach using electric instruments and modern recording techniques that had further repercussions in the jazz world and led to jazz-rock and fusion music. Many of the main people involved in this movement first made their name with Davis.

Throughout all these changes Davis' own trumpet-playing remained very much the same. The packaging and the support may have changed but his sense of lyricism, his use of space and his brittle tone, once likened to 'a man walking on eggshells', were instantly recognisable.

Part of his uniqueness had been established very early, in Alton, Illinois, where Davis was born on 26 May 1926. His first teacher said: 'Play without any vibrato. You're gonna get old anyway and start shaking.' At 19, Miles went to New York, ostensibly to study 'legit' at Juilliard School of Music. He later recalled: 'I spent my first week and my first month's allowance looking for Charlie Parker.' Parker was at that time engaged in changing the nature of jazz by moving from the steady, swinging approach of a band like Count Basie's to the nervous freneticism and complexities of what became known as bop. Although Davis failed to match up to the range and technical abilities of Parker's regular trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, his recordings and public appearances with Parker were sufficient to mark him out as a young musician to watch.

Further interest was shown, at least by fellow-musicians, when he formed a nine-piece group in 1948 that featured French horn and tuba in addition to the more normal jazz instruments. Along with musicians such as John Lewis, Gerry

Mulligan and Gil Evans, Davis applied some new, almost orchestral, thinking to the musical advances made by bebop; the result was the excellent and highly influential album *The Birth Of The Cool* (1948). Both the ideas and the musicians associated with this record were of great importance in the development of the 'cool' school, a fresh, subtle style of music prominent on the West Coast in the Fifties.

Davis was involved with Gil Evans again in the late Fifties when they recorded three albums extending the approach used in *The Birth Of The Cool* in a magnificent way. These albums, *Miles Ahead* (1957), *Sketches Of Spain* (1959) and *Porgy And Bess* (1959), placed Miles in sumptuously orchestrated surroundings and were highly acclaimed.

They also gave Miles access to a new approach to improvising which was to affect his thinking quite radically: 'Gil only wrote a scale for me to play. No chords. This gives you a lot more freedom and space to hear things.' That approach was not new to jazz but it was Davis who codified it in the stunning 1959 album, *Kind Of Blue*. Davis had spoken of the 'infinite possibilities' of such an approach, and these were demonstrated on this album in various ways. Firstly there were the different approaches of the separate compositions to this scalic method: 'So What' was based on a 32-bar standard song form, and used one scale only, transposing it for the middle eight; 'Flamenco Sketches' used five scales, with the soloist playing each until he wished to move to the next. Then, within the pieces, Miles approached his solos lyrically, playing mostly notes from the scale, while saxophone player John Coltrane played in a more complex way, using the scale as a point of departure.

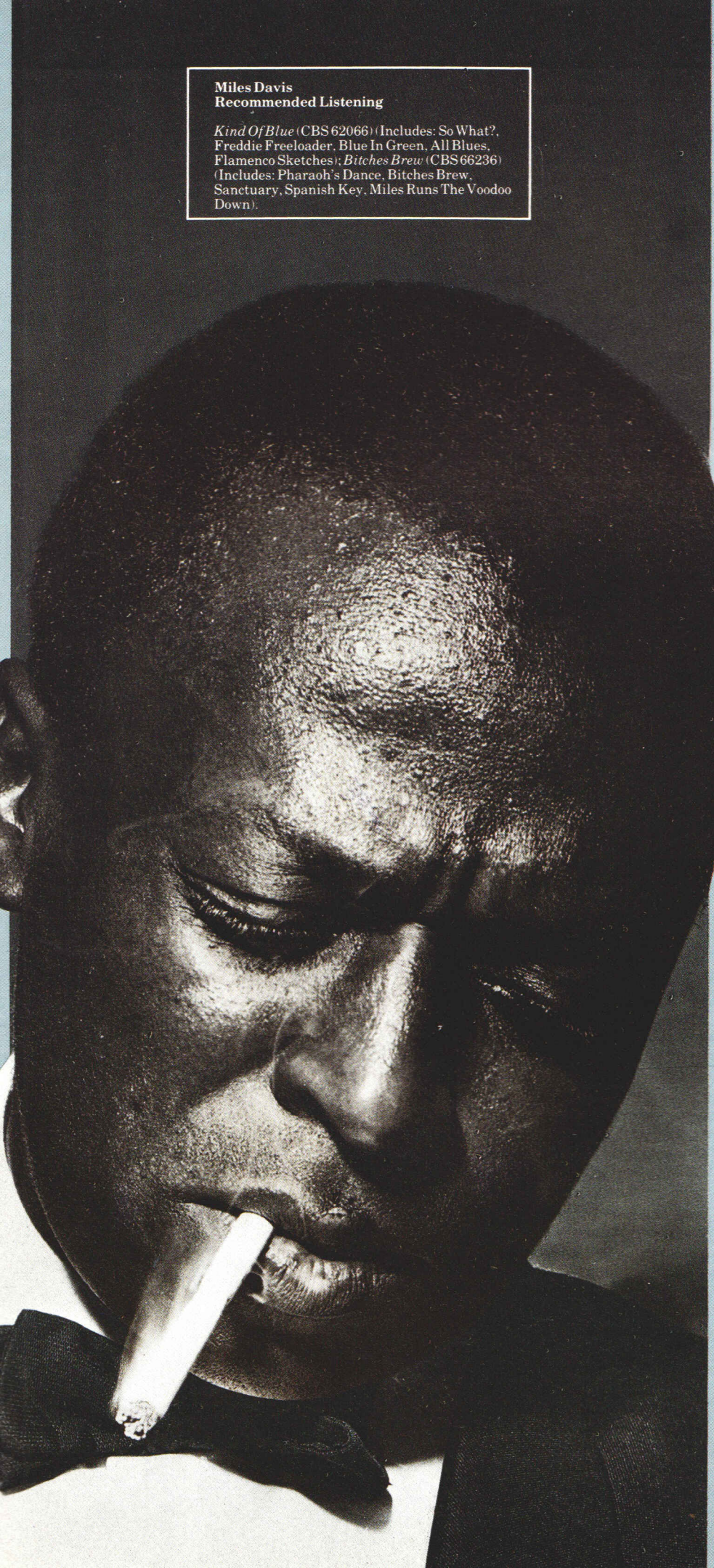
Inspirational rhythms

Such freedom crossed stylistic boundaries and had an influence on almost all musicians of the period. They realised that they were no longer bound by well-used repetitive forms and structures and began to operate in fresh, often simpler, ways. Davis took full advantage of this in the next few years in work with his new band, which included three of the musicians who became closely linked with the jazz-rock movement. For them, and many others, exposure to Miles Davis and his thinking had an inestimable effect. They were saxophonist Wayne Shorter (later to form Weather Report with Joe Zawinul), who provided many of the compositions, pianist Herbie Hancock and drummer Tony Williams.

Right: Smoke gets in your eyes. From his early days with Charlie Parker (inset above), trumpeter Miles Davis (above) was constantly innovative, and his work had a great influence on many rock musicians.

Williams' rhythmic concept, in particular, added a lot to the group, now remembered as one of the best jazz outfits of all time. He played *around* the beat rather than stating it forcefully, and his superimpositions of double, triple and quadruple time over the basic pulse provided much of the group's excitement. One of the best examples of the group's approach to rhythm can be heard on the title track to *Nefertiti* (1968), where Davis and Shorter provide the basic structure with their repetitive playing of the theme, leaving the rhythm players to improvise freely.

All this music had been made on acoustic instruments: Hancock on the grand piano and Ron Carter, a superb player, on the traditional upright bass. However, in 1968 Davis started to use electric instruments, at first mainly for their colouristic possibilities; they eventually replaced the regular instruments on *Miles In The Sky* (1968) and *Filles De Kilimanjaro* (1968).



Miles Davis
Recommended Listening

Kind Of Blue (CBS 62066) (Includes: So What?, Freddie Freeloader, Blue In Green, All Blues, Flamenco Sketches); *Bitches Brew* (CBS 66236) (Includes: Pharaoh's Dance, Bitches Brew, Sanctuary, Spanish Key, Miles Runs The Voodoo Down).

A silent way

For his next record, *In A Silent Way*, recorded early in 1969, Davis augmented his group with *three* keyboards – played by Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock and Josef Zawinul. Together with Tony Williams and new bassist Dave Holland, they laid down a filigree carpet of sound for solos from Davis, Shorter and guitarist John McLaughlin. Unusually for jazz at that time, Davis had heavily edited the performances in the studio as well as repeating some of the sections. The album was thus created as much after the session as during it, and this outraged many diehard Davis fans who preferred the 'truth' of a live performance.

However, such fresh sounds attracted a different, younger audience, many of whom discovered Miles following a cover feature in the December 1969 edition of *Rolling Stone* and the publicity given to his next album, *Bitches Brew* (1970). As with *In A Silent Way*, many instruments were used to create a background – this time further enhanced by the burblings of Bennie Maupin's bass clarinet – for the solos of Davis, Shorter and McLaughlin.

The success of Davis' controversial new approach was evident; he was selling records in quantities previously unknown to a jazz musician. After some initial problems, he began to play live concerts to rock audiences, even topping the bill at such venues as the Fillmore East. Inevitably the band underwent several changes, with Michael Henderson replacing Holland on bass and Keith Jarrett joining on keyboards. Drummer Billy Cobham also spent some time with Davis, as did percussionist Airto Moreira, drummer Al Foster, saxophonist Dave Leibman and guitarist Larry Coryell. Albums such as *Jack Johnson* (1971), *Live Evil* (1972), *On The Corner* (1973) and *Agharta* (1975) were successful, but faced serious competition from those by Davis' alumni.

After those early Seventies albums, Davis fell silent. Rumours inevitably spread that 'something was happening', that Miles would return at the end of the decade – as he had done previously in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties – with a brand new direction to astound his fans. Sadly, the reasons for his disappearance from the music scene were the recurrence of an earlier hip-joint problem and an ulcer operation.

In the early Eighties, Davis began touring and recording again with a six-piece band featuring Marcus Miller (bass), Bill Evans (soprano sax), Mike Stern (guitar), Al Foster (drums) and Mino Cinelu (percussion). The group made successful concert appearances in the USA, Japan and the UK and recorded a live album in Boston and Tokyo, *We Want Miles* (1982). Although the album marked no radical stylistic change in Davis' music, it showed that the master's playing had lost none of its grace or economy. GRAHAM COLLIER

Heavy Weather

Weather Report's high pressure improvisation

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE that when the newly-formed Weather Report were rehearsing for the 1971 Newport Jazz Festival, they were pushed to find enough material for a full live set. With an album and a world tour each year in the ensuing decade, the two survivors of the original line-up, Josef Zawinul and Wayne Shorter, were faced in the Eighties with the problem of deciding what to include from their massive output. But in the summer of 1971 the venture seemed merely the customary case of that year's star jazzmen getting together for a recording session with whatever material was to hand.

Usually these *ad hoc* mixtures brought together by record companies produce albums of historical interest and technical virtuosity but very little magic. Weather Report, however, was different. Zawinul (born 7 July 1932) and Shorter (25 August 1933) had met when the former arrived from his native Austria. They had kept in touch while pursuing parallel courses – Zawinul with Maynard Ferguson, Yusef Lateef and Cannonball Adderley (whose pop-jazz hit 'Mercy, Mercy, Mercy' he wrote), and Shorter with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and Miles Davis. It was on the Miles Davis albums *In A Silent Way* (1969) – which took its title from a Zawinul composition – and *Bitches Brew* (1970) that the two finally came together to prepare the ground for their own group.

Sound pictures

The bassist they chose was Miroslav Vitous (born 6 December 1947), the Czech virtuoso who had stunned jazz fans and musicians with his playing with Stan Getz, Herbie Mann and others. His style was far removed from the plonking background accompaniment of the average jazz bassist – he amplified and treated the sound to give a growling, almost vocal line that stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the front-line instruments. It fitted well with the oblique approach favoured by both Zawinul on keyboards and Shorter on sax, hinting at the written notes then sliding off into melodic asides before suddenly pouncing on the theme again.

The first album, *Weather Report* (1971), showed to perfection the result of these three improvising together over a floating, tinkling carpet of rhythm laid down by drummer Alphonse Mouzon (born 21 November 1948) and Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira (5 August 1941), who played the then obligatory battery of cuicas, caixixi, jawbones and all manner of devices. Vitous' bass and Shorter's soprano sax wove unison duets; Zawinul's electric piano hinted at chords and the usually prominent solo instruments drifted in and out of the foreground in a laid-back, impressionistic manner.

For a couple of years this line-up continued, with Eric Gravatt and Dom Um Romao replacing the original percussionists. The second album, *I Sing The Body Electric* (1972), had one side studio-recorded and the other taken from a concert in Japan; the full, uncut version of the latter, released on Japanese CBS, showed that any hint of meandering was ruthlessly excised, even sections of only a few bars. The live side gives a great impression of the energy and fluency that developed as the band played more and more together. While Gravatt powered them all along, Zawinul took the Rhodes piano to its limits with all kinds of distortion effects, a hint of the synthesiser sound-empire he was to begin building soon after.

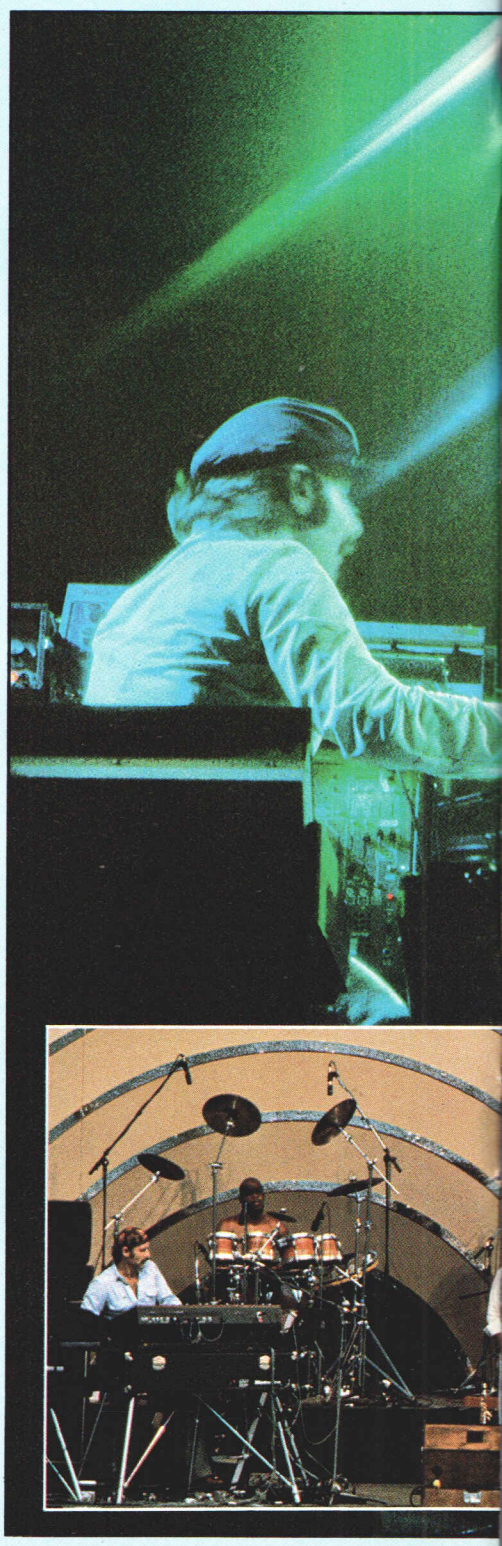
Heat waves

Then came the relative disappointment of the 1973 album *Sweetnighter*, on which the band sounded bored and unhappy by their previous standards of exuberance. The recording was dry and lifeless, the rhythm section sounded like a drum machine on autopilot and Zawinul as a composer was at his most minimal. Even accepting that the hip thing at that time was to sit back and groove, that it was bad form to write too much or have complicated structures, it was a sad album. The fact that Vitous was on his way out (his leaving card being the record's outstanding composition, 'Will') probably had much to do with that.

After various personnel changes, however, the band that visited Europe in 1973 brought renewed hope. Zawinul started using more synthesiser, both as a solo instrument and an occasional chord-filler and, by the time 1974's *Mysterious Traveller* appeared, Weather Report had regained both quality and imagination. It was on a different level, however – with this album they verged at times on the grandiose, employing canned applause, massed choirs of synthesisers and a lush Californian studio sound. At the same time they showed they had lost none of their intimacy, as the delicacy of Shorter's 'Blackthorn Rose' amply demonstrated. Their bassist for the next two years was Alphonso Johnson, loose-limbed and nimble, funky but imaginative.

The band's next album, *Tail Spinnin'* (1975), was an attractive, freewheeling showcase for Zawinul and Shorter's exemplary writing and playing. Then, in 1976, some of the best work they had ever recorded was released – the album *Black Market*. Everything about it was excellent. It was both subtle and powerful, and it marked an invigorating return from an unvarying, jazz-funk, rhythm-machine feel to human, organic playing. Zawinul's lush use of synthesisers brought colour to

Below: Weather Report's Wayne Shorter sings the body electric on soprano saxophone. Flanked by Joe Zawinul on keyboards and Jaco Pastorius on bass (inset below, at Crystal Palace), Shorter was a key member of the group.



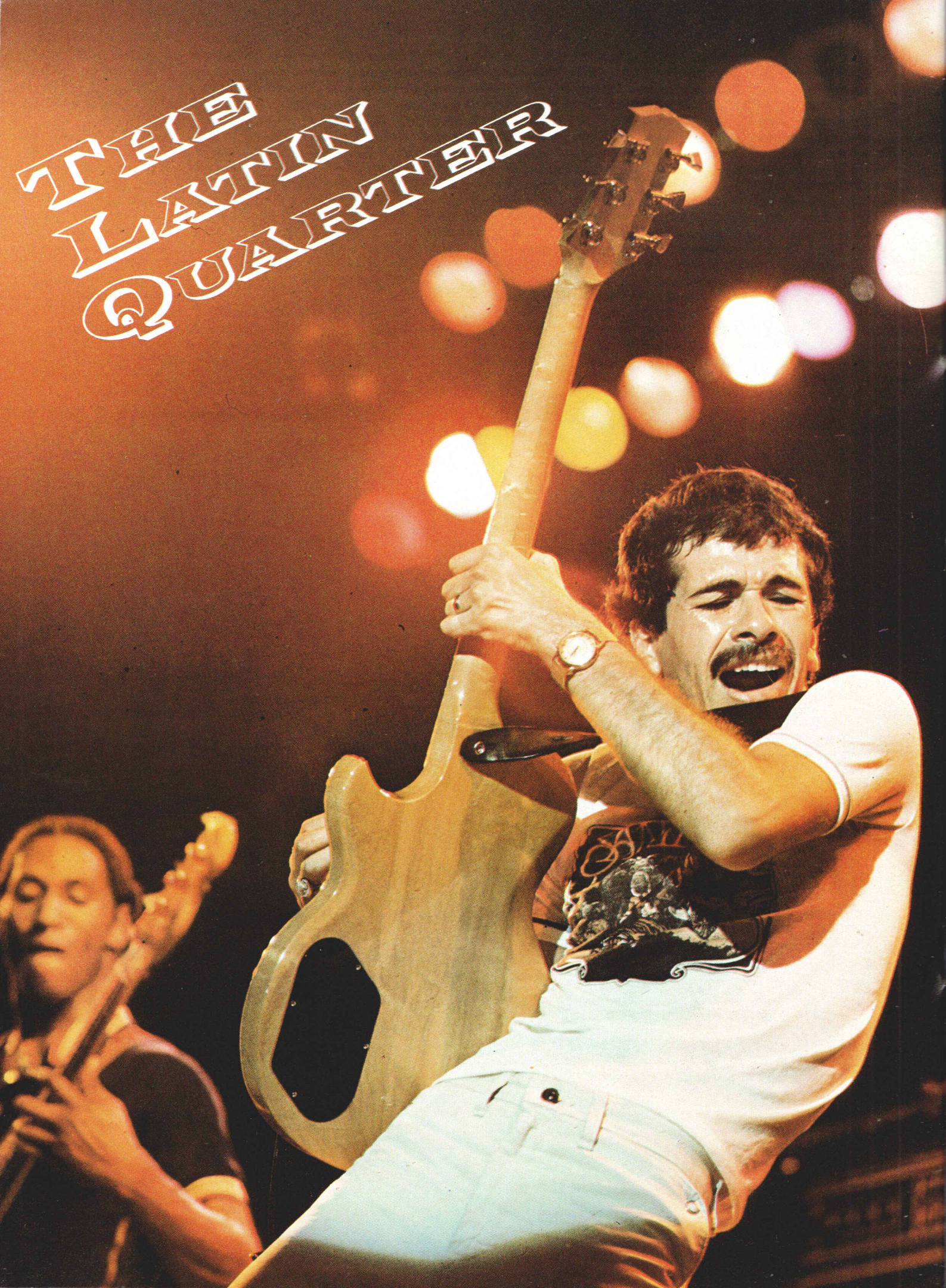
the arrangements and everyone's playing was faultless. Two of the tracks, 'Cannon Ball' and 'Barbary Coast', featured the arrival of bassist Jaco Pastorius, whose 'singing' bass tone – achieved with the aid of his fretless Fender Jazz Bass – and unsurpassed dexterity were soon to bring him fame.

The triumvirate of Zawinul-Shorter-Pastorius continued until 1982, producing a series of albums that stood as models for the admittedly declining number of jazz-rock practitioners. Certain gems and nuggets shone out, like 1978's *Mr Gone* and the joyful 'Birdland' on its predecessor, *Heavy Weather* (1977), before Pastorius eventually went the way of previous Weather Report bassists.

By the Eighties, Weather Report had probably passed their peak, but were still out on their own in the field of jazz-rock. The original live spirit of 1971 had become enshrined: Zawinul now claimed the title of Orchestrator, and indeed many of the little riffs and phrases that he used to zip out as throwaways on the electric piano reappeared as written themes or arrangements, scored for several instruments. The music was still good, but the spontaneity that had been the band's trademark had, sadly, long since departed. HUGH HOPPER

Weather Report
Recommended Listening

Weather Report (CBS 32024) (Includes: Milky Way, Umbrellas, Morning Lake, Tears, Waterfall, Eurydice); *Heavy Weather* (CBS 81775) (Includes: Birdland, A Remark You Made, Palladium, Havana, The Juggler, Teen Town).


THE
LATIN
QUARTER

Santana: percussive power and a singing guitar

EMERGING AT THE END of the Sixties from the heart of hippiedom, San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury area, Santana were the first band to find success with a merger of electric rock and the percussive rhythms of Central America and Africa. The band has had a chequered career since their inception, the one constant feature being the highly distinctive guitar-playing of Carlos Santana. However, despite continued activity and international success into the Eighties, it is their earlier work with its startling energy and successful fusion of musical forms that remains their most significant contribution to the history of rock.

Above: Carlos Santana (second from left) with drummer Michael Shrieve (third from left) and the classic six-piece line-up of the late Sixties. Opposite: The sweet sustain of Santana's singing guitar.

The Cisco Kid

Carlos Santana, born in Mexico on 20 July 1947, was brought up in the town of Autlan de Novarra. His father, Jose Santana, was a Mariachi musician who emigrated with their family to San Francisco in 1962, but it wasn't until 1966 that the young Carlos joined them there. San Francisco was then a hot-bed of musical activity and innovation and Carlos, who had taken up guitar in 1961, lost no time in becoming involved. A mutual friend introduced him to Mike Bloomfield, with whom he sat in for a jam; guitarist Tom Frazier, who witnessed the session, was so impressed with Carlos' playing that he afterwards tracked down the Mexican and suggested that they start a band together. By the end of 1966, Santana and Frazier had recruited percussionist Mike Carabello and organist Gregg Rolie – the Santana Bluesband had been born. (Bloomfield was impressed, too, and later on, in 1968, invited the guitarist to join him and Al Kooper on stage at the Fillmore West – the results appeared on the 1969 album *Live Adventures Of Mike Bloomfield And Al Kooper.*)

It was at this early stage that Bill Graham, promoter of the hugely prestigious Fillmore venues, first became involved with the band. Having originally met Carlos trying to sneak into the Fillmore West through a toilet window, Graham gave the Bluesband work at the venue; among the bands they supported were Paul Butterfield and the Who. In a personnel shuffle around July 1967, founding member Tom Frazier left, while David Brown joined on bass and Marcus Malone was added on percussion. The band's name was shortened to Santana, and, largely due to Malone's influence, the music started to move away from its blues roots towards a more Afro-Cuban, percussively-dominated sound.

This trend continued when Latin percussionist Jose 'Chepito' Areas was recruited in July 1969. Marcus Malone was convicted on a charge of manslaughter in mid 1969 and departed to serve his jail sentence, leaving a line-up comprising Santana, Mike Carabello (percussion), David Brown (bass), Chepito Areas (percussion/trumpet), Mike Shrieve (drums), and Gregg Rolie (organ/vocals) to become the first unrecorded band to headline at the Fillmore West. They then took the stage at the celebrated Woodstock Festival in August 1969.

Santana's appearance at Woodstock launched them into rock's premier division without further ado, and when their debut album *Santana* was released on Columbia later that year, it very quickly became a million-seller. CBS producer David Rubinson recalls: 'When it came out, you could not turn on the radio for six weeks without hearing the damned record!' The group also appeared in the *Woodstock* film (1970) and their performance of 'Soul Sacrifice' remains one of the movie's highlights: a battery of Latin percussionists lined up behind the guitarist, his face grotesquely distorted in an effort to wring the last drop of emotion from his sweetly-singing guitar.

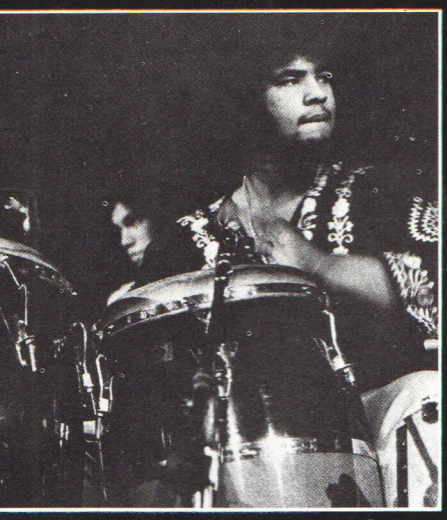
The film helped to introduce Santana to a wider audience; a second album, *Abraxas* (1970), quickly scaled the charts on both sides of the Atlantic, while a version of Fleetwood Mac's 'Black Magic Woman' afforded the group a Number 4 hit single in the US.

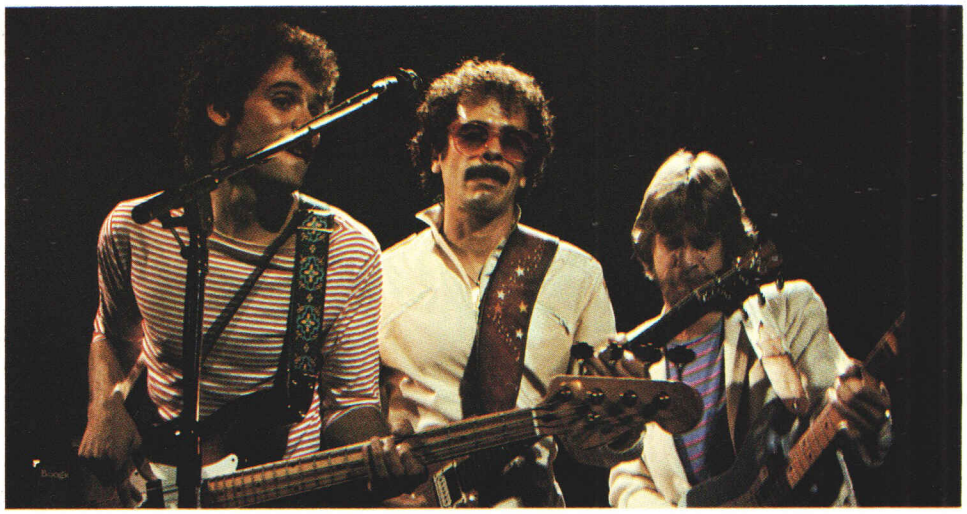
It is the first two albums with the six-piece line-up that constitute the most enduring of Santana's recorded work. Both records were highly distinctive and charged with an ethnic vitality quite unlike the more weighty and sombre heavy rock of that period. Drummer Mike Shrieve and bassist David Brown laid a steady but rolling foundation, while the twin percussion of Areas and Carabello added dynamic variety and rhythmic thrust, their contributions being especially enhanced by the unusually deft production that often placed them at either extreme of the stereo 'left-to-right' image. Gregg Rolie's organ and powerful soul vocals counterpointed Carlos Santana's extravagantly sustained and vibrant guitar work, to complete a melodically textured and explosively percussive sound. The quality of the songs was undeniable: standouts were *Santana*'s 'Soul Sacrifice' and 'Evil Ways' and *Abraxas*' 'Samba Pa Ti' (which made the UK Top Thirty when re-released as a single in 1974).

Devadip's devotion

Throughout 1971 various additional recruits joined the line-up; by the time the band came to record *Santana 3*, guitarist Neal Schon had brought his more technically complete, but also rather staid style to the group, while Coke Escovedo had joined to add further percussion. By this time, however, the drug habits of certain band members were causing disenchantment, mistrust and upheaval within the ranks. Following a drugs charge in August 1971, bassist David Brown left to be replaced by Tom Rutley and by the end of 1971 most of the band had split amid confusion and acrimony. Neal Schon and Gregg Rolie later went on to form the hugely successful Journey. Santana ceased to exist as a touring unit for the following nine months, although Carlos recorded the jazz-influenced *Caravanserai* album in 1972 with selected personnel.

The year 1972 saw Carlos Santana undergo a period of transition and reassessment; he came to embrace the religious teachings of the guru Sri Chinmoy, later adopting the name Devadip Carlos Santana as a mark of his conversion. The move away from drugs towards religion seemed to strengthen the guitarist's resolve. His new band, put together in September 1972, retained only the services of percussionist Chepito Areas and drummer Mike Shrieve; newcomers included dis-





Left: Carlos plays Gibson in the early Seventies. Above left: Chepito Areas (left) and Mingo Lewis add Latin percussion. Above: Santana in the Eighties, with David Margen (left) and Alex Ligertwood.

tinguished jazz vocalist Leon Thomas, keyboardist Tom Coster and percussionist Armando Peraza.

The musicians were now hired and paid a salary by Carlos, and it was even reported that he had instituted a system of fines for wrong notes and misconduct after the fashion of James Brown and Ray Charles. In 1975, Carlos explained his policy thus: 'The line-up only changes when things conflict. And it only conflicts with people when they're not being sincere and when they haven't a 100 per cent commitment to the band as far as not drinking and not taking drugs.'

As well as hiring and firing members of the endlessly changing Santana line-ups, Carlos also collaborated with the Mahavishnu Orchestra's John McLaughlin, the man who had introduced him to the teachings of Sri Chinmoy, to produce the woefully overblown *Love Devotion And Surrender* (1973), a compendium of rock-guitar bombast. *Welcome* (1973) continued the progression towards a more jazz-dominated fusion – the title track was a John Coltrane composition – and Leon Thomas's rich, muscular singing lent an air of authority to the album. It was the last to feature Santana's longest surviving collaborator, drummer Mike Shrieve, who fell ill on the eve of an American tour in August 1974 and was swiftly replaced. A brilliant and steadfast player throughout Santana's trying history, Shrieve nonetheless left with the accusation from Carlos that 'He was getting wishy-washy on his drums.' He went on to form the anything but wishy-washy Automatic Man.

Santana's 1974 release, *Borboletta*, was also in the jazz-rock idiom but was both a critical and commercial disappointment, and it now became apparent that the band was beginning to lose its audience. The 1976 album *Amigos*, however, was a clear and commercially successful attempt to return to the old Santana's Latin roots. It was also the first Santana album to reach the Top Ten in America since their third, back in 1971. *Festival* (1976) and the double *Moonflower* (1977) continued in this vein, the latter album yielding their biggest-ever British hit single, a remake of the Zombies' 'She's Not There', which reached Number 11 in 1977.

Whatever else his religion may have done, it seems to have kept Carlos Santana in good shape. He worked without respite throughout the Seventies and, as well as touring and recording with Santana, contributed to albums by Narada Michael Walden and Herbie Hancock, and produced a solo album *Oneness/Silver Dreams Golden Reality* (1979). In the late Seventies Santana flirted with the disco/soul fusion rhythms of the city dancefloor – on *Inner Secrets* (1978) and *Marathon* (1979) – before returning once again to a more traditional formula on *Zebop!* (1981) and *Shango* (1982).

By now, the Santana band had become entirely a vehicle for the grimacing guitarist who once described his ever-changing group as: 'An institution flowing through time and space. Musicians come into the flowing river, ride through the rapids into calmer water and then move on to be replaced by others who add their own energy and inspiration to its flow.'

While there has never been another band quite like Santana, there can be no doubting their influence in alerting many rock and soul bands to the possibilities of using percussion to embellish their music. Their approach can be seen to have percolated through to such diverse artists as Sly Stone, Talking Heads, Pigbag, and many other bands who have been inspired to utilise a varied assortment of percussive devices as part of a propulsive rhythmic attack.

DAVID SINCLAIR

Santana
Recommended Listening

Santana (CBS 63815) (Includes: Evil Ways, Soul Sacrifice, Waiting, Shades Of Time, Savor, Jin-Go-Lo-Ba); *Abraxas* (CBS 64087) (Includes: Black Magic Woman/Gypsy Queen, Crying Beasts, Samba Pa Ti, Oye Como Va, Incident At Neshabur, El Nicoya).

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

The band that put brass into Sixties rock

BS&T in 1972. Clockwise, from left: Jerry Fisher, Bobby Colomby, Dave Bargeron, Jim Fielder, Larry Willis, Lou Marini, George Wadinius, Steve Katz, Lou Soloff and Chuck Winfield.

TIME HAS NOT been kind to Blood, Sweat and Tears. They are either remembered for the extravagance and musical pretentiousness of that brief period during 1970-71 when they were one of the world's leading rock acts, or for the commercial and artistic enfeeblement of later years. They tend not to be remembered for their exciting and innovative work of the late Sixties. Although reviled ever since by the critics and spurned by the public, in the Sixties the group had credibility-plus. After all, it had been founded by Al Kooper, whose own personal standing had been high from the time he'd first attracted attention as one of Bob Dylan's sidemen between 1965 and 1966 during the latter's *Highway 61/ Blonde On Blonde* period. Kooper had then gone on to form Blues Project, a band that had won great critical acclaim as *the* outstanding East Coast blues outfit.

In May 1967 Kooper left Blues Project and travelled throughout the US searching for recruits for a new band. In the event he only discovered bass-player Jim Fielder, who had previously had brief engagements with Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention and Buffalo Springfield. Kooper decided to continue his search in London, but lacked the financial means of getting there. To pay his fare, he agreed to do some solo gigs at the Café Au-Go-Go in Greenwich Village, where Blues Project had first cut their teeth. His backing musicians were Fielder on bass, Steve Katz (a former ex-Blues Project member) on guitar and Bobby Colomby on drums.

Kooper became so enthusiastic about this line-up that he scrapped his London plans. Instead he recruited a four-man horn section: Fred Lipsius, Randy Brecker, Dick Halligan and Jerry Weiss. Blood, Sweat and Tears were thus intended from the start to employ a horn section as an integral part of their sound.

Classic rockers

The line-up contained some highly-trained musicians, some of whom had academic qualifications in music, and thus reflected the fact that the rock music of that period was becoming more and more sophisticated. While Kooper – who freely admitted that his own organ-playing was rudimentary – was still around, the group was able to maintain the delicate balance between technical ability and the untutored exploration that is so essential to rock.

Child Is Father To The Man (1968) was an excellent debut album – it was well-conceived, containing versions of songs by composers such as Randy Newman and Carole King, and enjoyable to listen to. Kooper's concept was simply to use horns to achieve a fuller sound in order to diversify and broaden the range of rock. The album featured ambitious horn arrangements in the tradition of jazz trumpeter Maynard Ferguson (whom Kooper cited as an important influence), and was genuinely innovatory.

By the time of 1969's self-titled second album, however, the band had lost Kooper,

Top: Vocalist David Clayton-Thomas (left) leads the refrain. Above: Al Kooper rehearses the group's original brass section, from left Fred Lipsius, Dick Halligan, Jerry Weiss and Randy Brecker.

who moved on to other work, notably the *Super Session* project with Mike Bloomfield and Stephen Stills. If he felt that the band he'd created was capable of looking after itself, he'd have been correct.

A changed line-up was thus responsible for *Blood, Sweat And Tears* and the band's third album, *Blood, Sweat And Tears 3* (1970), which together catapulted the band into the superstar league. Brecker and Weiss had left in Kooper's wake, the former to become a much sought-after sessioneer. The departing trio had been replaced by four newcomers: Chuck Winfield (trumpet, flugelhorn), Lew Soloff (trumpet, flugelhorn, piano), Jerry Hyman (trumpet), and last but not least vocalist David Clayton-Thomas. Born in London on 13 September 1941 and a naturalised Canadian, Clayton-Thomas had a massive

frame to match a massive voice; his reputation rocketed with that of the group.

Ambassadors of the arts

Blood, Sweat And Tears topped the US charts in the spring months of 1969. It yielded three major hit singles – Laura Nyro's 'And When I Die', the old Motown chestnut 'You Made Me So Very Happy' by Brenda Holloway and Clayton-Thomas' own 'Spinning Wheel'. Although it was a powerful and positive album, it also revealed the group becoming more self-consciously arty and less in touch with its rock roots. Suddenly, the band's audience, however numerous, seemed overwhelmingly composed of young, well-dressed business executives. It might almost be said that Blood, Sweat and Tears were appealing to an audience that didn't like rock music. Their identification with the establishment seemed complete when they undertook a tour of Iron Curtain countries (Yugoslavia, Rumania and Poland) in the summer of 1970 on behalf of the US State Department.

This process became even more pronounced on *Blood, Sweat And Tears 3*, when the group tried both to repeat a successful formula (this time without the producer of their inspired second album, James William Guercio, who had left to shape Chicago's career) and to continue moving in the direction of 'art'. Where they had once been enjoyable and imaginative, they now became ponderous.

The album contained hit singles, most notably the Clayton-Thomas composition, 'Lucretia MacEvil', and there were also lengthy versions of two popular rock songs – the Rolling Stones' 'Sympathy For The Devil' and Traffic's '40,000 Headmen', both of which had been extended to incorporate 'classical' interludes. Rock fans hated such treatments, and regarded the group with something close to open hostility, while previously sympathetic rock critics turned on them savagely.

This adverse reaction gradually gained momentum from the summer of 1970 onwards, when the group, having just returned from Eastern Europe, achieved their second consecutive US Number 1 album with *Blood, Sweat And Tears 3*. So popular were they in concert at that time that Clayton-Thomas was moved to observe that 'There are only 20 cities in the US with big enough concert halls for us to play.' Yet suddenly the bubble burst, and Blood, Sweat and Tears abruptly found themselves the most unfashionable of outfits. Some group members felt this keenly and accordingly tried to retrace their steps, consciously moving back towards rock at the expense of the band's proven formula. In addition to the unsettling effect of a lack of critical respectability, the group's other main problem was the total absence of a guiding personality. In 1971, Clayton-Thomas left to pursue a solo career; although he returned 18 months later, his presence was insufficient to revive the band's fortunes.

Blood, Sweat and Tears shifted an incredible 35 million records for CBS, mostly in their peak years between 1969 and 1971; since 1972, they hardly sold anything, and a label change to ABC (later MCA) availed them nothing. After their commercial star had waned, their biggest mistake was simply to have kept going. By 1980 this once-proud band was in the humiliating position of being forced to cancel UK appearances because of a complete lack of interest on the part of audiences; Blood, Sweat and Tears still had trouble finding somewhere to play – somewhere small enough.

BOB WOFFINDEN

Blood, Sweat and Tears are shed on stage by the band at the height of their career in the late Sixties. From 1970 onwards, it was downhill all the way.

Blood, Sweat and Tears
Recommended listening

Blood, Sweat and Tears (CBS 63504) (Includes: And When I Die, Spinning Wheel, You Made Me So Very Happy, Smiling Phases, More And More).

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Brian May

Brian May plays his unique home-made guitar (overleaf) and shows Freddie Mercury the chords (above).

As guitarist in the ever-successful Queen, Brian May has developed a highly original style and distinctive sound. Although the complexity of much of Queen's music has frequently been condemned by critics, few would deny that May is one of the world's finest rock guitarists.

As well as his great technical facility, May also has a highly developed sense of melody and harmony. One of Queen's earliest trademarks was the way in which his lead guitar lines ran counterpoint to Freddie Mercury's vocals, forming an integral part of the overall melody. May's approach to solos has continued this melodic emphasis, and reflects the formal structure of Queen's arrangements. He has commented: 'I've always felt the solo should be as melodic as the melody [of the song] . . . I tend to treat the solo almost as a song in itself.'

May has been continually inventive in his use of the electric guitar. 'Brighton Rock', the opening track on 1974's *Sheer Heart Attack*, is a spectacular tour de force that highlights his bold use of two Echoplex units modified for extended delay. In an unaccompanied section, he plays a line, then plays a harmony in time with the echo repeat and so on, single-handedly building his own hypnotic swirling guitar orchestra. He is able to duplicate this perfectly on stage and the number has since been a consistent live favourite. In the studio May, developed a technique of painstakingly overdubbing multiple layers of harmonised guitar to create a vibrant symphonic effect, as in 'Procession' on *Queen II* (1974) and the National Anthem coda to the following year's *A Night At The Opera*. These advanced skills do not conceal any lack of feel; he can play with simple uncluttered enthusiasm, as the rockabilly swing of 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love', a hit single in 1979, demonstrates.

It was Queen's proud boast right up until *The Game* in 1980, that they used no synthesisers or guest musicians on any of their recordings. The breadth and richness of the band's sound were therefore due in large part to the resourcefulness and ingenuity of May.

Surprisingly, the guitar which he has nearly always used with Queen is home-made. May and his father built the instrument for a cost in materials of about £8. The neck was carved from an old fireplace – 'a beautiful, straight piece of very close-grained, well seasoned mahogany' – while the tremelo unit, notable for its range and accurate return, is made up of some old motorcycle valve springs to balance the strings and an arm that used to be the support for a saddle-bag on a bicycle. The stress of the strings is held by an old piece of oak, while the rest of the body of the guitar is fashioned from blockboard to provide resonance and hold the controls. The electrics are standard, though a carefully designed set of switches provide numerous pickup combinations.

This highly personalised instrument is obviously a vital element in May's unique sound, as is the fact that he plays it through a bank of Vox AC30 combo amplifiers – anything between 4 and 9 of them, depending on the size of venue. For a plectrum he uses a sixpenny piece, giving a predictably sharp edge to his sound when desired, but also permitting a surprisingly mellow and fluid tone when used in certain ways.

May acquired his first guitar, which he taught himself to play, at the age of seven. He formed a group called 1984 while still at Hampton Grammar School in Middlesex before going on to found Smile with Roger Taylor, and subsequently Queen. Although he has never sounded like Eric Clapton, the former Cream guitarist remains one of May's biggest early influences; it is thus a matter of particular pride that Clapton has since praised his work. May's love of the blues is amply demonstrated by his composition 'Sleeping On The Sidewalk' on *News Of The World* (1977). Other influences include B. B. King, Jimi Hendrix and Chuck Berry, whom he mischievously quotes at the end of 'Now I'm Here'.

Queen are well known for applying the most exacting standards to their recorded work, and May has always taken a leading role in these production duties – most notably on the 1980 *Flash Gordon* soundtrack, where he was principal arbiter and co-ordinator of the different group members' compositions. In addition to guitar, May has played such diverse stringed instruments as ukelele, on popular Queen numbers like 'Bring Back That Leroy Brown' and 'Good Company', and harp – which he reputedly learned to play in only one day – on 'Love Of My Life'. An inspired performer and well rounded musician, Brian May has emerged as a major talent of the Seventies who looks set, along with Queen, to contribute much to music in the Eighties.

DAVID SINCLAIR

THE HISTORY OF
ROCK